

Name: _____

World History (Honors)

The Mongols (!) D.B.Q.

All you need for your DBQ (document-based question) about the Mongols.

Chances are, you've heard of the Mongols. Or, in the very least, you've noticed their enormous empire in the map of 1237. Students of history have many and varied opinions about the Mongols. Why should we care? Because, the Mongols *could* be a symbol for how we today think we should or should not operate a government, society, or even a family. Why should we care to base our opinion on well-researched documents? Because, the Mongols are a symbol for any topic that people around us have lots of opinions about. Instead of forming a shallow opinion based on hearsay, it's good to develop the habit of forming an opinion based on an independent investigation of truth, and these documents are the avenue by which to undertake that independent investigation. In other words, perhaps doing DBQs helps up develop the habit of looking into something for ourselves before we judge. (I mean, could you imagine if we did this with new people we meet? Prejudice could go down by a lot, which could in effect help combat things like racism sexism, ageism, etc.) This independent investigation of truth is the basis of justice.



So... here we go!

DBQ: What is your opinion of the Mongols' impact? Defend your position using these documents.

You will eventually write an essay sharing your answer to this question. For now though, let's just focus on examining these documents and forming our opinion.

Document #1 “What Were the Mongol People Like in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries? Depends on Whom You Ask!”

1. Annotate the reading.
2. What can you infer about the economy, ideology, and technology of the Mongols from the descriptions given?
3. Which of their characteristics would be helpful to them during their career of conquest?
4. Which of the descriptions would you be most willing to accept as accurate? Which would you be least willing to accept as accurate? Why?

The men make the bows and arrows, manufacture stirrups and bits, do the carpentering on their dwellings and carts; they take care of the horses, milk the mares, churn the mares' milk, make the skins in which it is put; they also look after the camels and load them. Both sexes look after the sheep and goats.

At the entrance [of the palace] Master William of Paris has made for him [the Great Khan] a large silver tree, at the foot of which are four silver lions each having a pipe and all belching forth white mares' milk . . . The whole dwelling was completely covered inside with cloth of gold, and in the middle in a little hearth was a fire of twigs and roots of wormwood . . . and also the dung of oxen (Qtd. in Spuler 96-97).

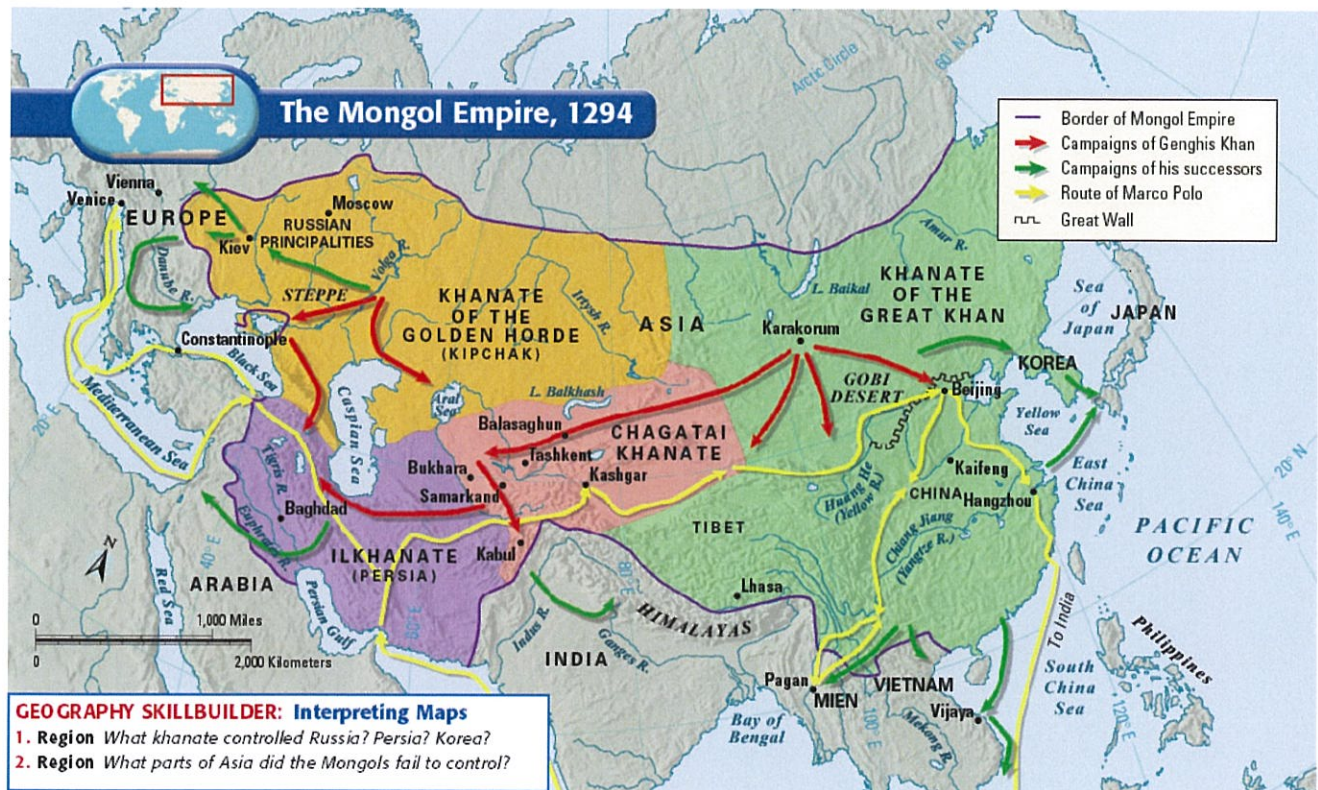
According to a letter by a Hungarian bishop who had custody of two Tartar captives taken in Russia, written to the bishop of Paris in 1257:

I asked them about their belief; and in few words, they believe nothing. They began to tell me, that they were come from their own country to conquer the world. They make use of the Jewish [actually, Uighur; the Uighurs were a semi-sedentary, literate steppe people, and early allies of the Mongols] letters, because formerly they had none of their own . . . They eat frogs, dogs, serpents and all things . . . Their horses are good but stupid (Qtd. in Paris 449).

According to a description by Matthew Paris, English chronicler, in the 1270's :

They are inhuman and beastly, rather monsters than men, thirsting for and drinking blood, tearing and devouring the flesh of dogs and men, dressed in ox-hides, armed with plates of iron . . . thickset, strong, invincible, indefatigable . . . They are without human laws, know no comforts, are more ferocious than lions or bears . . . They know no other language than their own, which no one else knows; for until now there has been no access to them . . . so that there could be no knowledge of their customs or persons . . . They wander about with their flocks and their wives, who are taught to fight like men (Qtd. in Rockhill).

Document #2 Map of the Mongol Empire



1. "Annotate" this image by listing information this map communicates.
2. What areas within Eurasia did the Mongols NOT conquest?
3. What evidence is there on this map that the Mongols were skilled conquerors?

Document #3 What was the Mongol Leader, Chinggis Great Khan, Really Like? Depends on Whom You Ask!

1. Annotate the reading.
2. Which of the items of information above about Chinggis' character would you question as to accuracy, and why?
3. How do you explain variations in the descriptions of what Chinggis was like?
4. Which of the accounts above do you consider most reliable, and why?
5. In what ways could Mongol ideas about women's position in society help the Mongols' career of conquest?

Document 3

What was the Mongol Leader, Chinggis Great Khan, Really Like? Depends on Whom You Ask!

According to a southern Chinese author who was an eyewitness of the bloody Mongol campaign in north China:

This man is brave and decisive, he is self-controlled, and lenient [merciful] towards the population; he reveres [respects] Heaven and Earth, prizes loyalty and justice (Qtd. in Ratchnevsky 167).

The Indian historian Juzjani wrote in 1256 in the Sultanate of Delhi and had been an eyewitness of Chinggis Khan's raid on India in 1221. According to him:

A man of tall stature, of vigorous build, robust in body, the hair on his face scanty and turned white, with cat's eyes, possessed of great energy, discernment [judgment], genius and understanding, awe-inspiring, a butcher, just, resolute, an over thrower of enemies, intrepid [fearless], sanguinary [bloodthirsty] and cruel (Qtd. in Saunders 63).

Chinggis himself had a letter written to a Chinese Daoist sage whom he had invited to discuss religious topics. The Daoist's companion included the letter in the account of the trip. He said:

I wear the same clothing and eat the same food as the cow-herds and horse-herders. We make the same sacrifices and we share our riches. I look upon the nation as my new-born child, and I care for my soldiers as if they were my brothers (Qtd. in Ratchnevsky 149).

The Muslim historian Rashid al-Din, the official court historian of the Mongol khan of Persia. According to him, some of Chinggis's sayings included.

From the goodness of severity the stability of government.

When the master is away hunting, or at war, the wife must keep the household in good order. Good husbands are known by their good wives. If a wife be stupid or dull, wanting in reason and orderliness, she makes obvious the badness of her husband.

Only a man who feels hunger and thirst and by this estimates the feelings of others is fit to be a commander of troops. The campaign and its hardships must be in proportion with the strength of the weakest of the warriors.

My bowmen and warriors loom like thick forests: their wives, sweethearts and maidens shine like red flames. My task and intention is to sweeten their mouths with gifts of sweet sugar, to decorate their breasts, backs and shoulders with garments [clothes] of brocade, to seat them on good geldings [horses], give them to drink from pure and sweet rivers, provide their beasts with good and abundant [plentiful] pastures, and to order that the great roads and highways that serve as ways for the people be cleared of garbage, tree-stumps and all bad things; and not to allow dirt and thorns in the tents.

It is delightful and felicitous [good] for a man to subdue rebels and conquer and extirpate [destroy] his enemies, to take all they possess, to cause their servants to cry out, to make tears run down their faces and noses, to ride their pleasant-paced geldings [horses], to

make the bellies and navels of their wives his bed and bedding, to admire their rosy cheeks, to kiss them and suck their red lips (Rashid al-Din, *Collected Chronicles*, qtd. in Riasanovsky 91)

According to inference from the laws that by tradition Chinggis set up:

If it is necessary to write to rebels or send messages to them they shall not be intimidated by an excessive display of confidence on our part or by the size of our army, but they shall merely be told: if you submit you will find peace and benevolence. But if you continue to resist—what then do we know [about your future]? Only God knows what then shall become of you (Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Syriacum*, qtd. in Spuler 40-41).

Whoever gives food or clothing to a captive without the permission of his captor is to be put to death.

[Leaders are to] personally examine the troops and their armament before going to battle, even to needle and thread; to supply the troops with everything they need; and to punish those lacking any necessary equipment.

Women accompanying the troops [are] to do the work and perform the duties of men, while the latter are absent fighting.

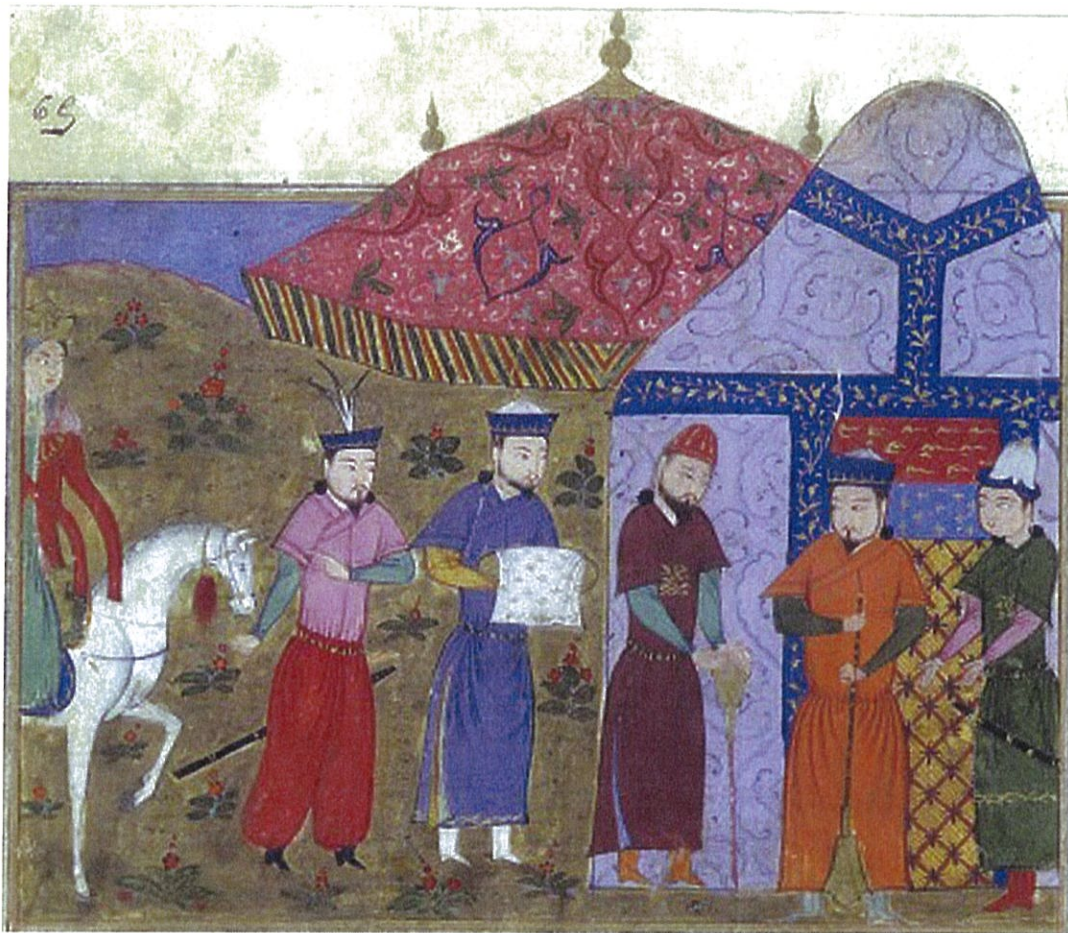
All religions [are] to be respected and . . . no preference [is] to be shown to any of them (Qtd. in Riasanovsky 83-85).

According to inference from the following decisions made by Chinggis Khan:

When fighting against hereditary enemies of his tribe, Chinggis's own son begged him to spare the life of the enemy leader's son. Chinggis replied: "How often have we fought them? They have caused us much vexation and sorrow. How can we spare his life? He will only instigate another rebellion. I have conquered these lands, armies, and tribes for you, my sons. Of what use is he? There is no better place for an enemy of our nation than the grave (Rashid al-Din, *Collected Chronicles*, qtd. in Riasanovsky 86)!

At a Grand Council meeting headed by Chinggis in 1202, it was decided that "in days gone by the Tartars killed our ancestors and forefathers. [Therefore] we will sacrifice them in revenge and retribution...by massacring all except the youngest....down to the very last male and the remainder will be shared as slaves among us all (*Secret History of the Mongols*, secs. 148, 154, qtd. in Ratchnevsky 151).

Document #4



Chinese envoys arrive for Chinggis Khan. Book art for Rashid a-Din's world history (1306-1311).

1. "Annotate" this image. In other words, what do you see and notice?
2. What impression does this painting give about Chinggis Khan? What evidence from the painting supports that impression?
3. This painting appeared in Rashid a-Din's world history book, *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh* (the loose English translation is *Compendium of Chronicles*). Some people consider this book to be the first book of world history, as it covered major events from China to Europe, including Mongol history. Today, about 400 pages have survived. What does this painting thus imply about how the Mongols were seen in comparison to other civilizations?

Document #5 Comparison Chart: Size of World Conquests

Conquerors	Square Miles Conquered
1. Genghis Khan (1162-1227)	4,860,000
2. Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE)	2,180,000
3. Tamerlane (1336-1405)	2,145,000
4. Cyrus the Great (600-529 BCE)	2,090,000
5. Attila (406-453)	1,450,000
6. Adolf Hitler (1889-1945)	1,370,000
7. Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821)	720,000

Note: The area of the continental United States (excluding Alaska and Hawaii) is 3,036,885 square miles.

1. How does the area of conquest of Genghis Khan compare to that of other leaders throughout history? Use specifics in your answer.

2. Does the size of conquest matter when talking about the greatness of a civilization? Consider the other civilizations on this list.

Document #6: “It Ain’t Necessarily So...”

1. Annotate the excerpts.
2. What evidence from other documents in this packet would confirm, modify, or contradict the statements here?
3. What questions might you ask to decide how reliable each of these statements is?

Document # 6

It Ain't Necessarily So . . .

According to the Persian historian Juvaini:

In the Muslim countries devastated by Chinggis Khan, not one in a thousand of the inhabitants survived (Qtd. in Nicolle 46).

According to the Muslim chronicler Ghazi:

Under the reign of Chinggis Khan, all the countries . . . enjoyed such peace that a man might have journeyed from the land of the sunrise to the land of sunset with a golden platter upon his head without suffering the least violence from anyone (Qtd. in Martin 6)

Document #7: Judging the Mongols

1. Annotate the entire reading.
2. What are the short-term and the long-term consequences of Mongol conquest for subject peoples?
3. Identify those consequences of the Mongol conquest that you consider historically significant, and explain the reasons for your choices. Which consequences do you consider most significant? Why?

Judging the Mongols

The impact of the Mongol conquest on the conquered peoples included:

- Death
- Destruction
- Extortion of wealth
- Disease
- Displacement

It also included:

- the intensification of activity on the trade routes connecting East Asia with the Mediterranean lands and Europe.
- the further spread of Islam in Asia
- the advancement of Tibetan Buddhism in China.

Death: The Mongols inflicted it on a large scale. In battle, their powerful bows caused heavy enemy casualties. Moreover, mass slaughter of defeated enemy soldiers and civilians was used as a deliberate policy of terror in order to:

- decrease the enemy's will to fight.
- induce cities to surrender without fighting, thus avoiding long sieges, which the Mongol army could not afford because it needed to keep moving to find grazing land for its horses.
- avoid the risk of leaving enemies behind that might be capable of renewing resistance.
- reduce the size of the occupying detachments needing to be left behind.

The total death toll directly inflicted by the Mongols during the period of their conquests, spanning nearly two centuries, may have been several millions. This includes the deaths by hunger and disease that were by-products of Mongol military operations and rule.

But:

More urban populations were spared than were massacred. Often spared were artisans, clerics of all religions, scribes, scholars, merchants, young women, and often officers, nobles, and administrators.

Mass slaughter was not a Mongol monopoly either in their own time or later. In taking a little Song Chinese town in 1218, the Jin general had 15,000 of the inhabitants put to the

sword. In 1291, King Edward of England slew nearly 10,000 people of Berwick. In 1303, 30,000 Hindus died in a battle at Chitor.

By the time of Mongke's rule, the Great Khan insisted that destruction be limited to a minimum and civilians be left alone. To show he was serious, he had a senior Mongol commander of 10,000 publicly executed for killing a Persian civilian.

Khubilai's revision of the Chinese law code reduced the number of offenses that carried the death penalty to half what it had been under the previous dynasties.

Destruction: The Mongols often destroyed the towns they attacked, usually as a by-product of the battle, sometimes deliberately after their conquest. Mongols traditionally had no use for towns. Destroying them was a practical measure to prevent their use for resistance.

Irrigation channels, without which agriculture in regions with fragile ecosystems was impossible, were in many areas seriously damaged or neglected. Gradually they silted up and became unusable, with serious long-term ecological consequences that resulted in a set-back for agriculture over wide areas for centuries. This problem was especially acute in Persia and Iraq.

Destruction was a by-product of the Mongols' conquests, rather than policy. They were unaware of or uninterested in the damage; while the local population, reduced by flight, massacre, famine, disease, could not spare the labor to restore and maintain the irrigation channels.

But: There was a great deal of construction initiated and supported by the Mongols. Many of the towns the Mongols destroyed rose again a few years later with Mongol help.

Courier services were expanded and many additional way stations were built along trade routes, where both troops and civilian travelers could get food, drink, lodging, and a change of horses. In China under Khubilai Khan, the postal relay system came to include 1400 way stations 14-40 miles apart.

Roads and bridges built originally to service the Mongol military became trade and travel routes.

The extension of the Grand Canal to Beijing by the Mongols allowed cheap transport of rice from southern to northern China.

Extortion of wealth: After first plundering the conquered, the conquerors were for a while satisfied with tribute in the form of demand of silk, grain, precious metals, and sophisticated war machinery. Unpredictable and capricious demands were gradually replaced with regular though intermittently extortionate taxes, sometimes made worse by demands that greedy Mongol princes and officials made for extra payments.

But: Some of the wealth that flowed to the Mongols was redistributed. Only part made its way to Mongolia. Much went back to those conquered areas where Mongols settled as occupying troops, administrators, and governors.

From about 1250, the Mongols undertook reforms. The Great Khan Mongke commanded: "Make the agricultural population safe from unjustified harassment, and bring despoiled provinces back to a habitable condition." He introduced the very modern

graduated income tax; repaid debts of previous rulers said to be owing to merchants; and made it more difficult for princes and high officials to practice extortion.

The lot of some segments of the conquered population actually improved, owing to profits from the trade promoted and supported by the Mongols, to their enforcement of law and order within their territories, and to their opening of careers to merit, not only birth or wealth. The poorest classes received something like government welfare assistance: food, clothes, and money.

Disease: The association of disease and warfare is commonplace. Troops live under more unsanitary conditions than is normal. Unburied corpses often contaminated water supplies. Among the overcrowded and underfed in besieged cities and in close quartered armies, an infectious illness could spread quickly. The existing food supply must be stretched to feed the invading army, leaving little for the local population and thereby reducing its immune system.

The frequent long-distance travel of military personnel, merchants, and others promoted the wider spread of diseases. Of these the Black Death (bubonic plague) was the best known and most severe. This disease may have been carried by soldiers from Inner Eurasia to the Black Sea, and from there to West Asia, North Africa, and Europe. This infection killed about one third of the total population of Europe.

Displacement: During the Mongol campaigns of conquest and later, there was large-scale enslavement and forced movement of populations.

Many fled in terror when news reached them of an approaching Mongol army.

Within the army, peoples of different backgrounds were deliberately mixed in all groupings from 10 men to 10,000. They and their families, who often accompanied Mongol armies, moved long distances on campaigns and spent long periods in far-away places as occupying armies.

In conquered territories, the Mongols usually rounded up the craftspeople, and assigned them to Mongol princes and commanders. These captives, who could number tens of thousands in a single city, were carried off to Mongolia or other parts of the growing empire. This gave rise to considerable population exchanges between Russia, Central Asia, Persia/Afghanistan, Mongolia, and China.

But: Although captive artisans and young women (destined to be slaves, concubines, prostitutes, and entertainers) often remained in their masters' hands for the rest of their lives, some gained their freedom and married locally, some eventually returned to their homelands. Moreover, artisans often gained privileges. The movement of peoples resulted in exchanges of goods, ideas and styles and in frequent and widespread contact between peoples of widely different cultural, ethnic, religious, and language backgrounds.

Thousands of people traveled from western and central parts of Eurasia to serve the Mongol regime in China. Marco Polo, the Venetian merchant who traveled to China with his father and uncle in 1271 and remained there for seventeen years, was just one of these foreigners seeking opportunity in Mongol administration.

Genoese merchants, who traded extensively in the Muslim lands and Inner Eurasia in the Mongol era sold Chinese silk and "Tatar cloth" at the fairs of Northern France.

Chinese artisans designed ceramics especially to appeal to Muslim tastes.

The Chinese exported copper and iron goods, porcelain, silks, linens, books, sugar, and rice to Japan and Southeast Asia in return for spices and exotic items like rhino horns.

At the time of his death in Italy, Marco Polo had among his possessions a Mongol slave, Tartar bedding, brocades from China, and a Buddhist rosary.

Khubilai Khan had Persian copies of the works of Euclid and Ptolemy translated into Chinese.

Egyptian experts were called in to improve Chinese sugar-refining techniques.

Muslim medical and astronomical sciences became known in China. Chinese medical works were translated into Persian.

Buddhist monks built Chinese style pagodas in Persia.

Persian miniatures show Chinese-style mountains and dragons.

A Mongol version of the traditional stories about Alexander the Great was produced.

Diplomatic contact with Western Europe intensified.

Columbus owned a copy of Marco Polo's book, and on his first voyage he took with him a letter from the Spanish king to the Great Khan.

Islam's spread among the peoples of the Mongol empire was also helped by the movement of peoples.

Many of the Turkic groups that allied with the Mongols had earlier converted to Islam. A significant number of them were literate, and employed by the Mongols as clerks, administrators, and translators as well as soldiers. They carried the Qur'an and their beliefs to new potential converts.

Persia and Iraq were overwhelmingly Muslim when the Mongols swept in. Persian became one of the official languages of the Mongol empire, used even in China. And Persian culture, along with Islam, spread into Central and Eastern Asia.

The Mongol Great Khans' preferred Muslims for senior positions in China. They thought that foreign Muslims could be more impartial than local Chinese. The foreign recruits could be blamed in case of Chinese dissatisfaction. Scholars from Persia were especially admired for their scientific and cultural achievements.

Starting in the thirteenth century, the Mongol khans of the Golden Horde and of Persia converted to Islam and threw their governments' power behind the Muslim faith.

Buddhism advanced in China owing partly to direct support from the Great Khans, starting with Khubilai. Tibetan lamas (monks), who had frequently held secular as well as religious power at home, began to move to China. Khubilai, whose wife Chabi was an ardent Buddhist, found the political experience of the lamas useful to him. He put a number of them in positions of power and influence. He also made large donations to Buddhist temples, gave tax-exemption to Buddhist monks, and supported them in their arguments with Chinese Daoists.

Christianity lost out in the long run in Asia, though not through any action of the Mongols. Some members of the Mongol princely houses and senior advisors were Nestorian Christians. Christians also served in the army. Some of the steppe tribes within the Mongol empire were Nestorian Christians. Several Popes, that is, the head of the Latin, or Roman Catholic Christian church, sent several envoys and missionaries from western Europe to Mongolia and China. European leaders had hopes of allying with Mongol leaders against the Muslim powers that challenged European political and commercial interests in the eastern Mediterranean. Neither the political overtures nor missionary labors resulted in much success for the Latin Church in Asia.

Christianity suffered partly because it did not speak with a single voice: believers in Latin Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Nestorian, and other Christian doctrines engaged in heated disputes with one another and competed for converts. Latin Christianity never caught on in any of the Mongol lands, and, with the advance of Islam, Nestorian communities in China and Inner Eurasia gradually shrank.